

Denny Blaine Rental Unit Addition to SF Home Points of Demonstration

Location:

- 194 36th Ave. E. Denny Blaine

Remodel and Addition

- Flexible space provides enlargement of existing single-family house
- or 1 bedroom rental unit

Affordable Housing In Denny Blaine?

Situated on the boundary between Madison Valley and the wooded enclaves along Lake Washington, Denny Blaine is historically one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Seattle. Yet, as even the smaller houses in the neighborhood climb in price, the economic and social diversity of the neighborhood is in jeopardy. This project takes a small single family house and adds a wing which could be used as an extension or a rental unit. A young couple could move to the street, subsidizing a new mortgage with rental income. The rental unit would be dramatically more affordable than other housing in the neighborhood, helping maintain social diversity. The flexible space could later be occupied by owners with a growing family.

This single house is a good one to trade for two. The existing 1960s box is considered an architectural eyesore by many neighbors. As a flexible duplex/family house, two families could live in a structure which would better suit the scale and character of the historic houses on the street.



Housing Statement and Intention to Build

The existing 1200 s.f. house is one of a pair built on a Denny Blaine infill site in 1967. The house has two bedrooms, open living/dining, and a kitchen. The lot is a typical 40' x 100' mid-block parcel. The goals of the remodel are threefold:

1. To improve architectural character in a manner fitting with the historic context of the Denny Blaine neighborhood.
2. To expand living space so that it appeals to potential owners with families, designing the additional space for flexible use.
3. To maintain the housing diversity present on many of the older lots in the neighborhood.

The proposal is to add second and third floors over a rebuilt single car garage. The 768 s.f. of additional living space could be used as a den and master bedroom for the existing house, or as an attached 1 bedroom rental unit. The house was purchased and financed with these changes in mind.

Affordability Features

Affordability is achieved in two ways.

Use flexibility

In keeping with people's changing housing needs, the remodel could function as:

- A two-bedroom house with income to help subsidize a mortgage and a large 1 bedroom apartment which could rent for well within the DDP maximum monthly rental goals of \$1100-1300.
- Or a three-bedroom house for a family with children at home



Efficient design:

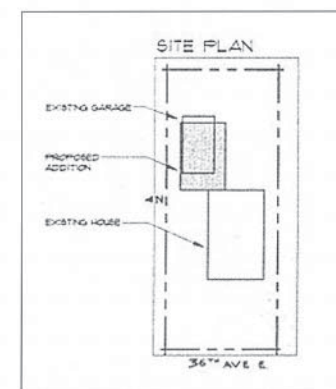
- The addition uses a 4' module to maximize use of standard building materials, while minimizing construction labor costs.
- Aluminum windows and sliding doors were thermally upgraded by previous owners. They will be replaced with more contextual wood windows on the street side of the house. The aluminum windows and doors will then be reused on the rear of the addition where they are in keeping with the more contemporary design vocabulary.
- Private yard space remains at ground level for the house, while the addition gains outdoor space on the previously inaccessible flat roof.

A shorter, more square building mass could accommodate similar square footage within the allowable building area of the lot. However, significant advantages are gained by the "L" shaped configuration shown. Neighborhood scale is maintained because the overall building mass is broken into smaller pieces lessening its visual impact and shadow casting. More light is bright into both parts of the building through increased wall surface. Privacy between the house and apartment is maximized while still maintaining an interior connection. The "L" shape allows the building to define positive outdoor space rather than the leftover space of a lot with a massive building at its center.

"Cracking the Code"

The addition is designed as a "bar" over the garage lining the north side of the yard, maximizing south facing open space. As drawn, the plan would violate City of Seattle Land Use Code. The code requires a rear yard setback of "25 feet, or 20 percent of lot depth (minimum of 10 feet) whichever is less." Living space in the end of the addition, and an exterior entry stair are both uses which are prohibited in the rear yard setback.

Using the building wings to define outdoor space and create privacy is a major urban design principal used in older, denser European cities. The stringent setbacks of the existing city code ignore such factors as solar orientation, lot topography, and spatial orientation of neighboring structures.





Neighborhood Acceptability

Floor plans and rendered sketches of the project were shown to immediate neighbors. Long-time neighborhood residents were interviewed about the impacts of "Mother in Law" apartments. Most people were enthusiastic about an architectural upgrade of the building. Several lamented a decrease in the number of young children in the neighborhood as housing prices climb above the reach of young families. Strategies to aid in affordability were welcomed. Neighbors pointed out the existing Mother in Laws behind older houses, and all agreed that apartments behind owner-occupied houses posed little threat to property values or neighborhood tranquility. The only negative feedback centered on shadow casting by a larger building, which the requested code variance is intended to mitigate.

Here's what the neighbors are saying

"I think it is a clever use of neighborhood space...I rather like creativity."

Nyra, next door neighbor

"I like the idea of kids on the street. Maybe that is a way families can do it — to have an apartment...It's a more interesting culture I think — people of different incomes, different kinds of families.....When he makes those changes, I won't have that sunshine."

Linda, over the backyard fence

"If someone owns a house has an apartment in it, and lives there, they will be pretty picky about it. They will rent to good people, care about the house and the neighborhood."

John, Denny Blaine resident for over 35 years.

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Architect:

Robert Lloyd
Seattle, WA

Owner:

Robert Lloyd

Neighborhood Advocate:

Nyra Gray

Project Summary & Jury Comments

Although the jury did not favor the "awkward — too tall!" profile of the structure this entry proposes, it found commendable the family-friendly flexibility offered by this solution.